

I know Florida's agriculture sector has been hit especially hard. Marty and Pat almost lost half their orange crop. I know a lot of other growers have lost a lot of crop too. My budget request will provide vital assistance to the citrus growers and to other farmers and ranchers who've suffered losses. Secretary Veneman and I will also ensure that Florida farmers are treated fairly on the global market and that no country takes advantage of citrus growers during this time of disaster. My administration will make sure that citrus remains a strong part of this State's economy.

The Federal Government is committed to helping people here get back on their feet. I call on Congress to pass my supplemental request quickly so we can get more people in Florida the help they need. These have been trying weeks for Americans across the Southeast, especially in this

State. Once again, I want to thank Jeb for his outstanding leadership. I thank the citizens of Florida for their great courage and their decency. Our Nation is praying for the victims of these storms. We pray for all who come to their aid.

May God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:39 p.m. in an orange grove owned by brothers Marty and Pat McKenna. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Charles H. Bronson; and Under Secretary of Homeland Security for Emergency Preparedness and Response Mike Brown. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Disaster Relief Officials and Volunteers in Stuart, Florida *September 30, 2004*

Thank you all very much for being here. And I'm really glad to be with my brother Jeb, the Governor, who has done such a—Jeb has shown tremendous leadership and compassion during these trying days for this great State. I am really proud of him.

I want to thank Mike Brown of FEMA. He has worked really hard as well to help relieve the suffering from these storms.

I want to thank all the State and local officials for working hard. I had the chance to meet some county commissioners from this county, people from the sheriff's office, people from the police department, all of whom are spending an extraordinary amount of time helping the citizens here who hurt.

I appreciate the strong leadership of the—of those who represent the armies of compassion. I'm proud to stand with the

men and women of the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and other faith-based and community groups that are providing important relief. Volunteers like these behind me have worked long hours to help those affected by the storms—long hours not only in Florida but in other States as well. The Red Cross, for example, has sheltered over 400,000 people. The Salvation Army, the Southern Baptist Convention, the Convoy of Hope from Springfield, Missouri, and other faith-based groups have set up kitchens and helped feed the hungry.

Unions and truckers have transported supplies. Young people have given up free time to lend a hand. I just met with some of the high school students here from Martin High School who are volunteering to help the Red Cross. I thank them for their example. I thank them for their service.

See, these volunteers show the true heart of America. Because we're a compassionate people, we care when a neighbor hurts; we long to help somebody when help is needed. They have the gratitude of all they've served, and they have the admiration for our whole country.

Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne have strained the resources of many relief organizations. People across the Nation have donated money and supplies to help their efforts. I'm grateful for their generosity. I hope many more Americans will continue to contribute. It's very important for our fellow citizens to understand the strain on the resources for the Red Cross, for example, or the Salvation Army or other faith-based groups. And if you want to help, if you want to participate in helping the good folks in this part of the country who hurt, contribute. You can contact the Red Cross at 1-800-HELPNOW or the Salvation Army at 1-800-SALARMY or the Florida Volunteer and Donations Hotline at 1-800-FLHELP1. Or you can contact one of the many other organizations that are providing help.

The Federal Government is working closely with State and local authorities to help people recover. FEMA is working with

Florida's Emergency Response Team and the National Guard to ensure safety. Medical personnel are treating the sick and the injured. Earlier today I visited a FEMA disaster recovery center where hurricane victims can go to register for disaster assistance.

I've asked Congress to provide \$12.2 billion in Federal funds to respond to these storms. I urge the Congress to pass my supplemental request quickly so the people of Florida can get the help they need.

People in Florida and many other States are coming through a trying time. I thank all those who've reached out to help the neighbors in need. I thank the leaders who have shown strength and composure during difficult times. And to our fellow citizens facing hardship, the prayers of our Nation are with you, and America stands with you.

Thank you all for coming. God bless your compassion.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:36 a.m. at the American Red Cross, Martin County Chapter. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; and Under Secretary of Homeland Security for Emergency Preparedness and Response Mike Brown. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on a Constitutional Amendment on Marriage *September 30, 2004*

Today a bipartisan majority of U.S. Representatives voted in favor of a constitutional amendment affirming the sanctity of marriage as a union between a man and a woman. I am disappointed that the House failed to achieve the necessary two-thirds vote. Because activist judges and local offi-

cials in some parts of the country are seeking to redefine marriage for the rest of the country, we must remain vigilant in defending traditional marriage. I welcome the important debate underway across America on this issue.